

Aug. 20, 1964

Dear Folks —

Please forgive the stationery — it's all I have at the moment!

I know that June has been keeping you well up-to-date on what has been happening, but maybe I can add a little. It is so hard to get everything down on paper! First of all, I want to tell you what a tremendous job June and the kids have been doing. They all seem to have a kind of natural sympathy with Africa and Africans. June walks to the market and already has friends among the market women, even tho' they have no spoken language in common. She seems to have the same sort of free acceptance of life that they have and it communicates! She is really loving it and seems to feel that they are her kind of people — as I do. They are very earthy in a really lovely way. Not at all remarkably, Steve is the one of the boys that has opened up to it most easily. This is really his kind of place.

It is a tremendous asset to me to have them along. Africans understand people in terms of their relationships. I had never realized before how hard it is for them to understand a person in isolation from his family, because the family is the fundamental framework in which they live. This came out in a session I was having with the lad with whom I am trying to learn a little Ibo. He asked me, pointing to

one of the boys, "Who is this?" (in 160) I responded with his name. This, it developed was not a satisfactory answer, since the information wanted by any African who asked that question would be the relationship of the person asked to the person asked about. The correct answer would have been "He is my son." The name is purely incidental!

It is amazing the way the boys are developing their own creativity, too. They don't seem to miss T.V. and stores and the "canned recreations" in the slightest. They collect things and make up games and make things. (Steve cut himself pretty badly while whittling. It required a couple of trips to the clinic for dressing and penicillin shots, but he's still whittling! It is amazingly like the way I grew up, even though in our house we have comfort approaching luxury.

The University is interesting. It is a self-contained city which has been plunked down in the middle of the "bush". Within 10 minutes' walk from our house are some of the most primitive Africans I have seen. We are surrounded by bush villages and can hear the drums in the evening and the muskets being fired off when somebody dies.

I think June told you about Chief Nwamba. We have become pretty good friends and he has taken me around his village a good bit. His elder brother is the priest, or Atamah,

of a very big Jo-Jo. Nwamba took me to visit him in his compound one evening and the feeling is indescribable - sitting in a grass-thatched mud hut with animal skulls hung around the walls and a little oil bush-lamp for light and chatting with this person. When you see these weird things in their proper environment they make a lot more sense and are not as primitive or superstitious as we are inclined to believe.

The landscape is beautiful, particularly around dusk. There are clumps of bush growth, palms, mahogany, etc. and wide stretches of grassland with scattered palms. The terrain is rolling with high hills and deep valleys.

We can look out from our house and see six or seven miles up a valley. The country is criss-crossed with bush roads, barely passable to an automobile and you can drive for miles without seeing a sign of civilization other than bush villagers. It is perhaps the most majestic scenery I have ever seen. You folks would love it. Actually, it is the very sort of thing I was looking for for my family and I don't see how we could have struck it any better.

Well, that is enough for now - oh! we have a "function" tomorrow night. Nsukka is the home-town of the President of the Republic of Nigeria and he is in residence. He is having a reception for the student group from M.I.U. that I have been working with and June and I are invited.

On the subject of "functions" I have to tell you about one a week ago. We were visiting a village and they made an occasion of it with dances and drumming and ~~elephant~~ elephant-tusk trumpets - the whole African bit. When June was presented to the chief, instead of sort of timidly shaking hands, like the other American women, she dropped the prettiest curtsey that you ever saw, just as she had seen the African women do. I hadn't coached her, it was her first experience of the kind and it was just right. I looked across the circle at the clan elders and there was a kind of stir and approving murmur. I think she's going to be a one-woman Peace Corps! Must quit now.

Love to all,
Charles.

P.S.

I have had several sets of slides sent to you. Would you look at them and then send them to us? I will re-emburse you for the postage. It is the quickest way for us to get them, since I have no way of sending Air-Mail postage with the film.